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THE TRUE STORY OF THE JAMESON RAID AS RELATED TO ME BY JOHN HAYS HAMMOND

BY ALLEYNE IRELAND

II

My last article ended with President Kruger's challenge to the British and American residents in the Transvaal, that if they wanted their grievances redressed they had better get rifles and fight for what they thought were their rights.

This brings me to the story of the Jameson Raid, an episode about which there has always been much confusion in the public mind. The reason why the full facts were not brought to light by the two official investigations of the circumstances—one held in Cape Town and the other in London—was that one of the conditions on which the four leaders of the Johannesburg end of the affair, and others arrested at that time, had their death sentences commuted, was a solemn pledge to the Boer Government that for three years they would remain silent upon all questions relating to Transvaal politics. Before this pledge had expired, all interest in the Raid had been swamped by the outbreak of the South African War, and in the meantime the Boers had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars (British and American dollars) in a world-wide propaganda of misrepresentation.

As soon as it became clear that an internal Revolution offered the only way out of our difficulties, a secret Committee was formed for the purpose of securing arms and of working out the details of our plan. This Committee consisted of Colonel Frank Rhodes—a brother of Cecil Rhodes, and one of the noblest men I have ever met—Lionel Phillips, Percy FitzPatrick, Wools-Sampson, George Farrar, and myself.

Our general scheme was to get some thousands of guns into Johannesburg, and then, on some dark night, to take Pretoria, the Boer Capital about thirty-five miles north of Johannesburg, seize the arsenal, carry Kruger off with us, and to negotiate at leisure for the redress of our grievances and for those constitutional changes which would make the Transvaal a Republic based upon a reasonable franchise law applicable to all its white inhabitants. Among the tasks allotted to me was to arrange for the importation of arms, for the taking of Pretoria and the capture of Kruger.

In view of what actually happened, this sounds like a very wild undertaking; but I am satisfied that if it had not been for the premature movement of Dr. Jameson's force (which I will describe later) we would have had a successful and bloodless Revolution, and that the Union of South Africa would have been formed without the fighting of the Boer War and without the Transvaal and the Orange Free State passing under the British flag.

Everything was in our favor. The Uitlanders outnumbered the Boers, the project of overawing Johannesburg by the construction of modern forts commanding the town was only in its initial stages, we had the sympathy of a considerable proportion of the younger burghers, and the mining capitalists who had hitherto frowned upon every suggestion of revolt had come round to our point of view and were ready to finance the Revolution.

Two things were considered absolutely necessary for the carrying out of our aims. One was the importation of arms, the other was some arrangement which would insure the safety of our women and children if anything went wrong and there was a prospect of heavy fighting in Johannesburg.

The first of these matters was easy to arrange but slow in execution, for the guns had to be smuggled in a few at a time; the second required the greatest care and presented the greatest difficulties.

Our arms and ammunition were smuggled in by a small group of Americans, of whom the most active were Mr. Gardner Williams, manager of the famous De Beers diamond mines at Kimberley; Mr. Labram, a mining engineer of a deservedly high reputation, and myself. They were imported from Europe, consigned to Kimberley, and were then sent by rail to Johannesburg concealed in oil tanks or in coal trucks.

After much anxious thought and many long discussions, a plan was arranged between Cecil Rhodes, Dr. Jameson (administrator of the Chartered Company's territories bordering the Transvaal on the west), and the members of the secret committee, whose names I have given above.

Rhodes, as virtual dictator of the Chartered Company, was to order Jameson to concentrate on the border a force of 1,500 mounted men, fully equipped, ready to ride into Johannesburg if and when called upon. A letter was given to Jameson by the reform leaders, explaining the conditions under which the revolutionary plot had originated. It contained the following sentence: "It is under these circumstances that we feel constrained to call upon you to come to our aid, should a disturbance arise here." This letter was left undated, and it was agreed that it was to be used only for the purpose of justifying Jameson in the eyes of his directors and of the British authorities, if he should actually enter the Transvaal, *and that he should on no account cross the border unless and until he had received from me (as representing Rhodes on the one hand, and the Johannesburg Committee on the other) a specific request to come in.* Of all the scenes of that period none is more clearly imprinted on my memory than that of Jameson shaking hands with me in the presence of Rhodes as a solemn pledge that he would not cross the border until I gave him the signal.

The exaction of this promise was based on two considerations: First, that the appeal to Jameson should come from a population already in a state of active Revolution; second, that as we on the spot could alone judge of the exact moment best suited for the rising, so we alone could determine the need for Jameson's entry and the hour when it should occur. Several tentative dates were fixed for the revolt, but these had in turn to be postponed on account of the slowness with which our arms were being smuggled in. About the middle of December, 1895, messages began to arrive from Jameson showing that the delay was getting on his nerves, and by Christmas Day we had become so alarmed by the possibility that Jameson might get out of hand that we sent two men, by different routes, each of whom delivered to him our emphatic protest against any unauthorized move by him; and he was warned both from Cape Town and from Johannesburg that if he disregarded his instructions we should all be involved in disaster.

In the meantime, the Boers began to suspect that something was on foot. On December 28 President Kruger received a deputation of Americans. Among them was Mr. Hennen Jennings, the distinguished mining engineer, who, though he was as anxious as the rest of us to secure reforms, was not convinced that peaceful means had been exhausted. Kruger asked the deputation:

"If a crisis should occur, on which side shall I find the Americans?"

"On the side of liberty and good government," was the answer.

"You are all alike," shouted Kruger, "tarred with the same brush; you are British in your hearts."

On Monday, December 30, I was sitting in my office in the Goldfields Building, the headquarters of the Reform Committee, when I received a visit from one of Kruger's intimate associates, a man named Sammy Marks, for some of whose enterprises I was consulting engineer. He was nervous and excited, and began immediately to discuss the rumors abroad. After we had talked for some time on the general situation, the door opened and a clerk came in and handed me a slip of paper. On it was written, "Jameson has crossed the border." I was thunderstruck. I can only be thankful that Sammy Marks was too much occupied with his own thoughts to notice the effect of the shock. It was clear to me that what he wanted was to find out how far we had gone in arming ourselves.

I knew that at that time we had less than fifteen hundred rifles and practically no artillery; but I knew also that if this fact got to Kruger's ears, after he had heard of Jameson's incursion, Johannesburg would be instantly attacked and that our whole plan would go to pieces. My conversation with Sammy Marks ran in this fashion:

"Well, Hammond, it looks as though we were going to have bloodshed."

"I shouldn't be surprised."

"They say you've got in 30,000 rifles."

"I don't know how many we've got, but I don't think it's as many as that."

"And how about artillery? Is it true you've got thirty guns?"

"Oh, no! That's an exaggeration, I'm sure."

In a few minutes Marks left. I had him trailed, and, as

I had foreseen, he went straight off by special train to Kruger. I learned later that he had told the President that we had at least 30,000 rifles and 30 guns!

By the time Marks was on his way to Pretoria the news of Jameson's raid had spread among the Johannesburg leaders. The situation called for instant action. The secret Committee was expanded into a larger body, known as the Reform Committee, which within a few hours included in its membership about seventy-five of the most prominent men on the Rand. The committee published in the *Johannesburg Star* of Tuesday, December 31, the following notice:

Notice is hereby given that this committee adheres to the National Union Manifesto,¹ and reiterates its desire to maintain the independence of the Republic. The fact that rumors are in course of circulation to the effect that a force [Jameson's] has crossed the Bechuanaland border renders it necessary to take active steps for the defence of Johannesburg and the preservation of order. The committee earnestly desires that the inhabitants should refrain from taking any action which can be considered as an overt act of hostility against the Government.

Our hand had been forced, and our position was critical in the extreme. We had arms for perhaps 1,500 men, but ammunition sufficient only for a few hours' fighting. In face of a Boer attack we should have been helpless. Many of the mines had closed down, and we had to fear serious trouble from the thousands of natives thus suddenly rendered idle. The Government police having left the town in a body, our first task was to organize our own police, so that there should be no disorder. Everyone worked with a will, and by noon on the last day of 1895 we had set on foot all the measures within our power to relieve the situation.

In order to emphasize the true quality of our position, I hoisted a Boer flag over the Goldfields Building, where all the meetings of the committee were held; and we all, then and there, swore allegiance to it.

Events now moved with great rapidity. On the evening of December 31, two delegates from the Boer Government (the so-called Olive Branch Delegation) reached Johannesburg. The first effort of the delegation was to treat with us as individuals. We were, however, well aware of the danger

¹ Issued on December 26. It recapitulated our grievances, and stated what we wanted. The first demand was for the establishment of the Republic as a true Republic, under a Constitution to be framed by representatives of the whole people.

involved in the success of such tactics. It was not in our capacity as individuals that we were assembled, but as a body representative of the Johannesburg people. We insisted on this point, and it was at last yielded by the delegation.

A long conference with the Reform Committee followed. The Boer delegates stated that the Government was prepared to grant us practically every demand of the National Union Manifesto; but, on being pressed for details, they admitted that Kruger was unalterably opposed to allowing either Roman Catholics or Jews to become voters in the Transvaal.

It was arranged that a deputation of the Reform Committee should go to Pretoria to meet a Government Commission. This plan marked the end of the attempt by the Pretoria authorities to deal with us as individuals, and thus to avoid recognizing the committee as a provisional government, which, in point of fact, it was.

On the evening of December 31, Sir Hercules Robinson—British High Commissioner for South Africa, whose suggestion that he should go to Pretoria as mediator had been accepted by Kruger and by the Reform Committee—issued a Proclamation of which the burden was that Jameson was immediately to retire from the Transvaal, and that all British subjects were to refrain from giving him any countenance or aid in his armed violation of a friendly State. This Proclamation was telegraphed both to Pretoria and to Johannesburg, and copies of it were sent by mounted men to Jameson in the field.

A personal friend of mine, a fellow member of the Reform Committee, Mr. Lace, went out in company with the man bearing the Proclamation. He has told me that when he informed Jameson of the lack of arms in Johannesburg, Jameson said, "That's all right; I don't need any help from Johannesburg." This conversation was confirmed to me by Jameson the following year in London.

On January 4, 1896, Sir Hercules Robinson reached Pretoria and at once began those negotiations in which, as it seemed to us, he was more anxious to mollify the Boers than to see justice done to the Uitlanders.

In the meantime, on January 2, Jameson's troopers had been surrounded by Boer forces under Commandant Cronje, and had surrendered. The effect of this on the action of the Johannesburgers can be understood only if the reader bears

constantly in mind that during the whole of the negotiations between the High Commissioner, the Boer Government, and the Reform Committee *the fact was concealed from us that under the terms of surrender the life of Jameson and of each member of his force was guaranteed*. That this concealment was extended also to the High Commissioner is proved by the following telegram from the High Commissioner, read to us by Sir Jacobus de Wet, the British Diplomatic Agent in Pretoria:

It is urgent that you should inform the people of Johannesburg that I consider that if they lay down their arms they will be acting loyally and honorably, and that if they do not comply with my request they will forfeit all claim to sympathy from Her Majesty's Government and from British subjects throughout the world, *as the lives of Jameson and the prisoners are now practically in their hands*.

In face of such an appeal there was nothing for us to do but to accept the High Commissioner's advice. We therefore gave up our arms and waited anxiously to see what steps Sir Hercules would take to meet a situation which he thus described in a telegram to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain on January 7:

. . . I have just received a message from the Reform Committee resolving to comply with demand of South African Republic to lay down their arms; *the people placing themselves and their interests unreservedly in my hands in fullest confidence that I will see justice done them*. . . .

Our confidence was certainly misplaced. On January 8 he telegraphed to Mr. Chamberlain: "I will confer with Kruger as to redressing the grievances of the residents of Johannesburg"; and later the same day: "I intend to insist on the fulfilment of promises as regards prisoners and consideration of grievances." On January 14 he left Pretoria for Cape Town; and on the 16th, in reply to an urgent telegram from Mr. Chamberlain about the redress of the Uitlander grievances, he wired, in part, "the question of concessions to Uitlanders was never discussed between us"—i. e., between him and President Kruger.

The Boers were very quick to perceive the indifference of the High Commissioner and to draw their own conclusions from it. On January 8 and 9 sixty-four members of the Reform Committee, including myself, were arrested and

taken to the Pretoria jail. On the 26th all were released on bail except Lionel Phillips, George Farrar, Colonel Frank Rhodes, Percy FitzPatrick, and myself. Of the prisoners, twenty-three were Englishmen, sixteen South Africans, nine Scotchmen, six Americans, two Welshmen, two Germans, and one each from Ireland, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, Holland, and Turkey.

It would be absurd at the present time to enlarge upon the discomfort and ill-health we suffered through being confined in the heat of summer in an overcrowded and unclean prison hitherto used for Kaffirs. I had a violent recurrence of the dysentery which I had contracted a few months earlier in the Zambesi country; but, through the indefatigable exertions of Mrs. Hammond, I was allowed to live under guard in a cottage at Pretoria; later, on fifty thousand dollars bail, to return to my home in Johannesburg, and, finally, my physical condition having grown steadily worse, to go to the lower altitude and cooler climate of Cape Town.

Our trial was originally set for April 24. As the day drew near and my health showed no signs of improvement, the anxiety of my wife, my friends, and my medical advisers showed itself in their united efforts to induce me to stay where I was, amid the comforts of a seaside home. The American Secretary of State, the late Richard Olney, went so far as to cable the Boer Government on my behalf; but I felt that both on grounds of personal and of national honor I should be in place with the other prisoners to face whatever Fate had in store for us.

An incident which greatly added to the fears of my friends was the action of a few irreconcilable Boers who declared their intention of lynching us before we got to court. For this purpose they took to Pretoria a heavy wooden beam from which five Boers had been hanged by the British in 1816! This threat was reported to me by private telegrams from Boer friends of mine in Pretoria.

The trial actually commenced on April 27. Sixty-four of us had been arrested and we were all present when the indictment was read, except one man, who was ill. Our position was a difficult one. A foreign judge had been imported to preside, a man who is reported to have boasted, before he even reached Pretoria, that he would make short work of us. The jury was, of course, made up entirely of Boers. Of our conviction not one of us had the slightest

doubt. We were all accused of High Treason, but there were several other counts of a less serious nature. It was very clear to everybody that of the sixty-three prisoners a large number had been followers rather than leaders. Our first concern was, therefore, to arrange, if it should prove possible, that only those of us who had been generally recognized as the heads of the revolt should incur the risk of the extreme penalty. After a good deal of private discussion between our counsel and the State Attorney, it was agreed that four of us would plead guilty to High Treason and that the other prisoners would be allowed to plead guilty to the minor charges. There was an understanding also that, in view of the pleas, the State Attorney would not urge the Court to inflict exemplary punishment. What the Boers were to gain as a quid pro quo was that all their political dirty linen would not be washed at a long trial which would be reported by every important paper in the world.

The trial lasted only a few hours, and almost till the last moment everything went as well as we could have expected. Dr. Coster, a Hollander, the State Attorney, made his formal address, asking simply that we should be punished according to law. Mr. Wessels, of our counsel, made an eloquent plea in our defence, and took his seat. We all thought that the judge would then sum up the case for the jury; but, to our consternation, the State Attorney sprang to his feet and claimed the right to address the Court. He then launched into a most violent attack upon us, and demanded that in passing sentence the Court should set aside the comparatively mild Statute Law of the Transvaal and should apply the old Roman-Dutch Law, under which death is the only penalty provided for High Treason. The Court, after hearing this impassioned appeal, adjourned until the following day.

I may borrow from an account written by one of the prisoners, Sir Percy FitzPatrick, the description of the scene in court when the sentences were imposed:

The usual question as to whether there were any reasons why sentence of death should not be passed upon them having been put and the usual reply in the negative having been received, in the midst of silence that was only disturbed by the breaking down of persons in various parts of the hall—officials, burghers, and the general public—sentence of death was passed, first on Mr. Lionel Phillips, next on Colonel Rhodes, then on Mr. George Farrar, and lastly on Mr. Hammond. The bearing of the four men won for them universal sympathy and approval, especially under the conditions immediately following

the death sentence, when a most painful scene took place in Court. Evidences of feeling came from all parts of the room and from all classes of people: from those who conducted the defence and from the Boers who were to have constituted the jury. The interpreter translating the sentence broke down. Many of the minor officials lost control of themselves, and feelings were further strained by the incident of one man falling insensible.

The other prisoners were sentenced to two years' imprisonment, to a fine of ten thousand dollars each, in default of payment to spend an additional year in jail, and to be banished from the State for three years.

Throughout South Africa, indeed throughout the world, the death sentences were regarded as excessively severe in view of all the circumstances. Petitions, bearing thousands of signatures, were addressed to Kruger from Cape Colony, Natal, and the Orange Free State, while a deputation composed of the mayors of more than two hundred South African towns set out for Pretoria for the purpose of appealing in person to the President of the South African Republic.

The first consequence of this agitation was that on May 30 all the prisoners who had not been sentenced to death were offered their liberty if they would sign an appeal for clemency, and pay \$10,000 each, an offer which was accepted, except by Mr. Wools-Sampson and Mr. Davies, who refused to sign any appeal. As soon as this matter was out of the way, the Transvaal authorities took up the question of what should be done with the four leaders. The first offer made to us was that we should each pay a fine of \$250,000 and write letters to President Kruger thanking him for his magnanimity. These terms we absolutely declined to consider, although the scaffold for our execution had been erected, and all other preparations made with much ostentation.

After a good deal of bargaining we were released on June 11 on payment of \$125,000 each (*Kruger having to go without his certificate of magnanimity*) and on our undertaking to keep out of Transvaal politics for fifteen years. Colonel Frank Rhodes refused to make this pledge and accepted instead a sentence of fifteen years' banishment.

So ended the revolt, so far as we Johannesburgers were concerned. Time has amply vindicated our cause.

In 1897 the grievances which had led to the Revolution were still unredressed, and, in consequence, a general financial collapse of the Transvaal was in sight. The Government of the South African Republic, alarmed at the prospect of

the mines shutting down and the moneyed element in the country taking its departure, appointed a Commission of Boer officials to inquire into the state of affairs. Its report, after declaring that "the mining industry must be held as the financial basis, support, and mainstay of the State," upheld on almost every point the complaints we had made in our repeated petitions; and suggested remedies. But the Transvaal Legislature rejected these recommendations, and Kruger stigmatized the Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Schalk Burger, a member of the Transvaal Executive Council, as a traitor for having signed the report.

After two years of protracted negotiations with the British Government on the subject of the grievances, Kruger issued an ultimatum to England, and the Boer War followed. If final proof is sought of the justice of the Uitlanders' cause, it is to be found in the fact that after the Boers had been conquered and their territories brought under the British flag, England immediately granted to the Boers all the civil, political, and religious rights which, in the day of their power, the Boers had denied to British, American, and other nationals. The wisdom of such a policy of fair treatment and equal justice has been made manifest in the Great War, in which, fighting side by side with the British, the Irish, and the Americans, are to be found Boer generals and thousands of Boer volunteers, whose only desire is to uphold the honor of that flag which so recently they had regarded as the emblem of tyranny.

When the Boer War was drawing to a close and the British Government was working out the plan of a general settlement of South African affairs, I happened to be in London. A dinner was given me by my valued friend, the late Earl Grey, who afterwards became Governor-General of Canada. Among the other guests were many of the British Colonial statesmen then gathered in London for the Colonial Conference. In responding to the toast of my health I spoke of the South African situation, and urged the view that only by generous treatment of the vanquished Boers could a South African Commonwealth arise out of the ashes of the conflict. From the warmth with which this opinion was received, and from later conversations with a number of those present, I am encouraged to believe that my voice was not without its share of influence in determining that magnanimous policy which has since welded South Africa into a united Empire.

As I look back after twenty years upon the events I have described, my conscience justifies the part I played in them. Given the same conditions, I would again act as I then acted, and should again be sustained by the firm conviction that I was striving to the best of my ability to maintain and to extend those imperishable principles of fair-play which are in a peculiar sense the heritage of the British Empire and of the United States.